



### Identification of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking, Refugee and Migrant Adolescent Girls

**Query:** Please create a descriptive annotated bibliography of existing programming resources covering asylum seeking, refugee and migrant adolescent girls, with a focus on their identification upon arrival in a new country when unaccompanied.

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#### Summary

Available research and resources that focus specifically on the numbers, patterns and experiences of unaccompanied asylum seeking, refugee and migrant adolescent girls in Europe, are scant. They are often subsumed under the term's '*children*' and '*women and girls*', with data specific to unaccompanied girls is often lacking.<sup>1</sup> Such girls tend to be more invisible than their male counterparts, with unaccompanied boys accounting for nearly 90% of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) asylum claims in Europe in 2017.<sup>2</sup> This report examines the heightened risks and threats of gender-based violence (GBV) that unaccompanied adolescent girls experience before, during and after migration, including trafficking. It outlines some of the gaps

and challenges in the identification, assessment and referral systems, services and mechanisms for unaccompanied girls. Finally, there is an annotated bibliography with case studies, research and tools related to the identification of unaccompanied adolescent girls. As noted, current resources and data on this topic are limited; building on these would help to inform assistance and services targeted towards unaccompanied girls on migratory routes, and with their identification upon arrival in a new country and when unaccompanied.

## **1. What do we know? Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking, Refugee and Migrant Adolescent Girls**

### **1.1 Background**

Since 2015, Europe has experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants fleeing conflict, violence, insecurity and a lack of opportunities in the Middle East, South Asia, East and West Africa. Although arrivals in 2018 were lower compared to the numbers in 2014-2017, the journeys were as dangerous as ever.<sup>3</sup> Those fleeing are vulnerable to violence, extortion and exploitation; women and girls, especially those travelling alone, face particularly high risks of violence, including sexual violence by smugglers, criminal groups and individuals in countries along the route.<sup>4</sup> In 2018, some 141,500 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe through the Mediterranean migration routes.<sup>5</sup> On average one in every four was a child. This included an estimated 6,000 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). In 2017, 60% of the children who arrived in Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria were unaccompanied or separated,<sup>6</sup> nearly double the figure reported in 2016. These children are at a very high risk of being assaulted, sexually abused, raped, trafficked into sexual exploitation or forced into “survival sex”.<sup>7</sup>

Reception conditions, particularly for UASC, are a major concern due to insufficient alternative care arrangements and increasing immigration detention, including as a “protective custody” measure.<sup>8</sup> In 2017, UASC accounted for 15% of all asylum applicants aged less than 18 years and most were males (89%).<sup>9</sup> In Greece, boys accounted for 93.3% of the total in UASC in 2018, 6.7% were girls and 8.6% of the total were under 14 years old. In Italy, UASC in Sicily’s reception facilities in 2017 were overwhelmingly boys (97%).<sup>10</sup> 42% of all child asylum seekers in Europe are girls.<sup>11</sup> More girls may be arriving on their own but not identifying to seek asylum or enter the protective system.

### **1.2 Adolescent girls – migrant, asylum seeker and refugees**

Women and girls account for almost half of all migrants globally but it is difficult to estimate how many of these are adolescent girls.<sup>12</sup> Adolescent girls are less likely to have life-saving information, skills and capacities to navigate the upheaval that follows displacement. Their needs and vulnerabilities vary and are influenced by how the humanitarian sector responds (or does not respond) to their specific needs, risks, and disadvantages.<sup>13</sup> Migrant, asylum seeking, and refugee adolescent girls often face triple forms of discrimination—as women, young people and migrants. Migration routes can be dangerous for adolescent girls and they face a unique set of violence-related risks, including sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking. Adolescent girls, especially those that are unaccompanied or separated, face even more threats due to their reduced protection, support networks, and increased exposure to GBV. Some may be fleeing violence in their home country or have experienced violence or

abuse on their route and are at risk of exploitation and trafficking. The European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) argue that as a group, the needs of adolescent girls often remain a significant gap in law, policy, funding and service provision in Europe. They are often subsumed under the term's '*children*' and '*women and girls*', and data specific to the migration experiences of girls is often lacking. This leads to challenges in securing specialised resources.<sup>14</sup>

Existing literature and data show that girls and women are considered particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse during transit, especially when travelling without a husband/father or other adult male companion.<sup>15</sup> A 2018 report by United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSML) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) detailed the violence and abuse experienced by women and girls who transited through Libya seeking asylum system in Italy. In Libya, females represent 9% of adult migrants and refugees, and children represent about 10% of the migrant and refugee population, with more than half of them being unaccompanied, including girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. It noted that "*the overwhelming majority of women and older teenage girls interviewed by UNSMIL reported being gang raped by smugglers or traffickers or witnessing others being taken out of collective accommodations to be abused. Younger women travelling without male relatives are also particularly vulnerable to being forced into prostitution.*"<sup>16</sup> UNHCR (2018) highlighted the ongoing risks of violence in the reception centres in Greece: "*on one of the islands, unaccompanied girls had to take turns to lie down due to overcrowding in the container to which they had been assigned. Going to the toilet required a police escort.*"<sup>17</sup>

The 2018 report by International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), '*Alone and Unsafe Children, Migration, and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*', highlighted that the needs and risks are different for boys and girls migrating alone. It stressed the need for improved protection of unaccompanied and separated girls (and boys) from GBV along their entire migratory route, ensuring access to needed services and mechanisms for the identification, screening and referral systems to be put in place or upgraded. The report recommends an in-depth gender and diversity analysis to better understand the specific and unique needs of UASC at risk of, or suffering from, violence.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.3 Trafficking

Human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls. Most of the victims of trafficking detected across the world are females – mainly adult women, but also increasingly girls. Amongst adult victims of trafficking, women are two times more likely than men to be victims. Amongst child victims of trafficking, however, girls are three times more likely than boys to be victims.<sup>19</sup> Reliable data on trafficking is difficult to obtain owing to its illegal, often invisible and clandestine nature. Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the most reported form and women and girls make up about 95% of documented cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Europe.<sup>20</sup> Reports by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) found that sexual exploitation increasingly involves younger girls – often under 18 years – who are already subject to violence and abuse on their way to Europe. The UN Secretary General Report on the Girl-Child of July 2017 emphasizes that "*girls are particularly at risk, facing unsafe transportation modes, abuse at the hands of smugglers and traffickers, forced labour, rape and sexual exploitation*"<sup>21</sup>

A 2017 report by IOM in Italy estimates that 80% of girls arriving from Nigeria are potential victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The report stressed that while women and unaccompanied girls from Nigeria are among the most at risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation, it cannot be ignored that migrants from other nationalities are also affected by trafficking. The report is based on data collected by IOM at landing sites and in reception centres for migrants in the regions of southern Italy. Between 2014-2017, Italy witnessed a six-fold increase in female victims of trafficking; most are Nigerian girls aged 15-17 years.<sup>22</sup> Uncertainty about the exact figures stems from the difficulty of identifying the victims, as many do not speak about their experiences and do not seek assistance unless they have serious health issues. Many trafficking victims lack legal status and are often dealt with by the authorities as immigration offenders/irregular migrants.<sup>23</sup> Often, girl victims of trafficking may misrepresent their age as older, having been told to do so by the person controlling them. They are unlikely to have identity documents, making age assessment an estimation of social workers or other authorities.<sup>24</sup> There may also be a sense of responsibility towards one's family that results in a fear of retaliation by traffickers on the victim's family members back in their country of origin.<sup>25</sup>

A 2018 study by the Trafficking along Migration Routes (TRAM): Identification and Integration of Victims of Trafficking among Vulnerable Groups and UASC project found that trafficking and exploitation are a major concern for migrants travelling along the Western Balkans route. However, the number of identified victims remains extremely low. Children travelling alone are recognised as one of the most at-risk groups for trafficking and exploitation. Girls and women are considered particularly vulnerable to exploitation during transit, especially when travelling without a husband/father or other adult male companion. The TRAM project aims to support the integration of victims of trafficking including UASC, by establishing a multidisciplinary and transnational approach for early identification, referral, service provision, protection and rehabilitation in the context of the current migration and asylum processes in transit and destination countries along the migration route. The report highlighted that the lack of statistical data on trafficking among these groups *"is to a certain extent the result of a vicious circle, whereby if there is no evidence of trafficking cases among a certain group, the necessary resources are not mobilised to address trafficking and proactively identify cases, which in turn prevents the gathering of accurate statistics."* The low number of identifications is also due to the lack of harmonisation and incorporation of anti-trafficking procedures into the first reception and asylum systems for new arrivals, leading to a disconnect between the two processes.<sup>26</sup> Procedures for identifying and reporting trafficking victims are distinct to those used for UASC.

## 2. Challenges in identifying unaccompanied and separated girls

**Identification:** Identification of UASC depends on many factors, including policies and laws on the treatment migrants, the policing structure at points of entry, training of staff policing points of entry, and policies on detention and encampment. Research conducted by IRC, UNHCR and UNICEF in 2016<sup>27</sup> to inform the development of policies and practices to address UASC in Europe highlighted fear of police and existing police brutality as major reasons for trying to evade identification and registration. Additional trainings for border authorities/police in how to approach and

identify UASC was recommended with child protection actors to be present at the point of contact. Identification procedures for UASC may require age assessments and interviewing by trained personnel. Good practice recommends that age assessments should only be conducted for children where there is a reasonable doubt regarding their age.<sup>28</sup> Interviews and age assessments should be conducted by same sex interviewers with same sex interpreters available when needed.

Much of the literature reviewed focuses on UASC as a homogeneous group and does not deal specifically with unaccompanied girls, especially adolescents. Research by IFRC (2018) found that efforts to identify and protect UASC are often slow to emerge at the beginning of a migration crisis and by the time such systems were in place, at-risk children had usually moved on or disappeared from the formal support systems or had already fallen victim to exploitation and abuse. Weak coordination between humanitarian groups and with governments can undermine efforts to quickly put in place an effective response. It indicated that while *“the assessment tools used by humanitarians often capture the number of migrant children travelling alone, they are not designed to detect or predict the specific risks that these children face. Very little information is gathered about the specific and varying threats that girls and boys face. This is a crucial gap as the level of risk varies greatly depending on the local context.”*<sup>29</sup>

**Missing children:** Although data remains incomplete, Interpol estimates one in nine unaccompanied refugee and migrant children is unaccounted for or missing; however, real figures are believed to be far higher. In 2015, more than 10,000 unaccompanied children went missing in Europe.<sup>30</sup> Many run away from reception centres to join their extended families while they wait, or because they have not had a full hearing to determine their best interests or have not had their rights explained to them.<sup>31</sup> Increases in UASC seeking refuge in Europe was accompanied by increases in reported rates of trafficking (see above) and evidence indicates some UASC who disappear are subject to unsafe living conditions, child trafficking and exploitation.<sup>32</sup> The [Missing Migrants Project](#) tracks deaths of migrants, including refugees and asylum-seekers, who have gone missing along mixed migration routes worldwide. As is the case for adults, the total number of dead and missing children are unknown.<sup>33</sup>

**Conditions within reception facilities:** GBV risks for women and girls, particularly related to insecure and risky living conditions in reception centres as well inadequate integration and assistance systems across Europe, have been well documented since 2016. Conditions expose women and girls to multiple forms of GBV including the lack of adequate security, the impact of the containment policy, other restrictions on freedom of movement, unsafe living conditions, and a lack of access to critical services.<sup>34</sup> Assessment reports found that the needs of women and girls often go unaddressed in reception centres where there may be no separate living spaces for females and no sex-separated latrines or shower facilities.<sup>35</sup> This increases GBV risks particularly for unaccompanied girls and single women who do not benefit from the protection of family members. Research also found that conditions in overcrowded reception centres magnify risks of sexual exploitation, trafficking, survival sex.<sup>36</sup> During transit and reception, access to GBV response services are limited and even where specialized services do exist, there are numerous barriers that prevent vulnerable children, including girls, from using them. Chief among these is the often-

legitimate fear that, by coming forward for support, they may be sent back to the dangerous places they have fought so hard to escape.<sup>37</sup>

**Lack of access to information on services:** Research conducted with UASC found that although support services may exist, some children are unaware of them or are unsure of who to trust.<sup>38</sup> The need to provide information on services in the manner, location and language that UASC can access is widely acknowledged. This should consider the different language and cultural needs, age, sex, levels of literacy and locations where they may receive information.<sup>39</sup> To address gaps in information, Missing Children Europe developed the Miniila app with children and launched it in April 2018. This features real-time and regionally specific information, allowing children to find out more about support services available near them on a map in their own language. It guides them towards trustworthy people who can help provide shelter, food, health services, legal assistance, guardianship and more.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. Implications for programming

Within the humanitarian response in Europe, progress has been made to develop tools and systems to identify UASC, and to make appropriate assessments and referrals for care. Tools like the European Asylum Office (EASO) Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN) aim to facilitate the timely identification of persons with special procedural and/or reception needs. This is a web-based interactive tool that may be used at any stage of the asylum procedure or reception process. It provides a non-exhaustive list of special needs including UASC, human trafficking, pregnant women; and based on selected indicators, can identify those with special protection needs including unaccompanied girls. The tool is aimed at all officials (border guards, police officers, registration officers, reception officers, social workers, case officers) of the determining authority who are involved and interact with an applicant for international protection.<sup>41</sup> While the tool is comprehensive, it requires officials to be properly trained on its use as well as having applicants share accurate information on their special needs, both visible and non-visible (e.g. trafficking). In addition to the challenges associated with training officials, the lack of sufficient sensitivity and appropriate support (namely, a female interpreter) during the asylum procedure to interview girls who may be experiencing violence and exploitation was highlighted as a barrier to identifying cases.<sup>42</sup>

In 2016, the European Women's Lobby (EWL), Women Refugee Commission (WRC) and ENoMW led a project, #Womensvoices, to raise awareness on the situation of women and girls fleeing conflict and travelling through Europe, looking especially at the protection risks they face. As part of this, they developed checklists and recommendations to improve the protection of women and girls, some of which include special provisions for addressing the needs of unaccompanied girls:

- Within centres, create safe spaces, including separate accommodation, for girls, with specialised culturally sensitive personnel;
- In interviews, ensure there is a trained appropriate adult to remind asylum officials of the rights of the child;
- Systematically appoint a social worker to actively follow the case;
- Provide child-friendly (age-appropriate) information on asylum procedures (through cartoons, leaflets etc);

- Train all staff, guardians and foster families on increased risk of sex trafficking and prostitution, child marriage, sexual violence, FGM and traditional harmful practices for unaccompanied girls;
- Provide girls with access to information on sexual health and reproductive rights;
- Provide all minors with therapy and trauma counselling, by female professionals for girls;
- Provide girls with mentors from host communities to facilitate integration and peer support, and establish a mechanism of foster families for unaccompanied minors;
- Provide funding for UNICEF and NGOs working for the protection of children's rights.

#### 4. Suggested ways forward

Much of the UASC guidance does not specifically address the needs of adolescent girls. While gender considerations are highlighted across some UASC guidelines, resources and tools (e.g. use same sex interviewees for girls, separate accommodation etc.), the diversity of unaccompanied girls – including girls travelling with young children, pregnant girls, and younger adolescent girls – are not well reflected. There are significantly fewer asylum applications from unaccompanied girls. While some data suggests that higher numbers of girls are travelling alone, they are not being identified within the existing UASC systems. Some studies show that girls are joining husbands (and may be travelling with their children), so movement to final destinations and family reunification account for some unaccompanied girls.<sup>43</sup> However, there are worrying trends from existing trafficking data that indicates increased risks of sexual exploitation and forced labour.

The ENOMW urges governments and service providers to develop clearer, up-to-date information about the experiences faced by girls on the move with sex disaggregated data that goes beyond the experiences of “*children*” and “*unaccompanied minors*” so that so that appropriate services and responses to girls can be improved.<sup>44</sup> Understanding the magnitude and scope related to unaccompanied girls’ mobility requires disaggregated information on numbers, movement patterns, social networks, risks as well as available protective resources for these groups. This could inform assistance and services targeted towards unaccompanied girls on migratory routes and identification upon arrival in a new country and when unaccompanied.

## 5. Descriptive annotated bibliography

Digidiki, D., and Bhabha, V., (2018) *Sexual abuse and exploitation of unaccompanied migrant children in Greece: Identifying risk factors and gaps in services during the European migration crisis*. Children and Youth Services Review Volume 92, September 2018, Pages 114-121

This study explores sexual abuse and exploitation of unaccompanied migrant children in Greece, and the risk factors associated with their occurrence. It was conducted in Greece during 2016 and the qualitative data reveal a series of institutional, legislative and individual factors that routinely expose unaccompanied children to sexual abuse and exploitation. The absence of safe and legal paths to appropriate migration destinations, the impossibility of returning home to oppressive and harmful environments, and the daily exposure to unsatisfactory, sometimes inhumane, living conditions inside migrant facilities, are the main factors that drive unaccompanied migrant children toward sexual exploitation. The study also catalogues a series of significant gaps in both government and non-government responses. Among the most important are the absence of an integrated child protection system that spans national and local jurisdictions, the failure of existing child welfare systems to classify unaccompanied migrant children as a distinct and unique population requiring immediate attention and care irrespective of migration status, and the lack of properly trained and qualified staff to work with this uniquely vulnerable population.

**European Asylum Office (EASO) (2018) *Indicators of special needs (ISPN) EASO tool for the identification of persons with special needs***  
<https://ipsn.easo.europa.eu/about-tool-0#Why%20was%20this%20tool%20developed>

The primary objective of this tool is to facilitate the timely identification of persons with special procedural and/or reception needs. It may be used at any stage of the asylum procedure and at any stage of the reception process. This tool is an interactive platform that provides a non-exhaustive list of special needs, including UASC, human trafficking and pregnant women. Based on selected indicators, the tool can identify those with special protection needs. It is an interactive, publicly accessible tool that allows a tailored support response to be created that addresses the special needs of the person holistically. In addition to identification indicators, the tool suggests generic guidance on the special procedural guarantees and reception support that could be provided to the applicant in the EU+ context. In all cases, even where no special need is apparent, identification and assessment of special needs should be done on an individual basis. The tool is designed to provide practical support in this individual identification process. It guides the user in a process through which he/she could ensure that an appropriate individual response has been provided to the special needs of the applicant.



**European Commission (2018) Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway. Synthesis Report for the European Migration Network (EMN) MN Study July 2018** [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00\\_eu\\_synthesis\\_report\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_2017\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00_eu_synthesis_report_unaccompanied_minors_2017_en.pdf)

This Synthesis Report presents the main findings of the 2017 EMN Study Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway. The study explores the situation of unaccompanied minors who have been granted a residence permit or issued a return decision; and, in turn, the approaches established by (Member) States to their integration or (voluntary) return. The study also covers unaccompanied minors who cannot be returned immediately and may be granted a temporary status, such as tolerated stay, at least in some (Member) States. The report provides an overview of good practice related to care arrangements for unaccompanied minors, including after-care of unaccompanied minors turning 18; integration of unaccompanied minors, including transitional arrangements for unaccompanied minors turning 18; return of unaccompanied minors; and disappearances of unaccompanied minors from care facilities or following a return decision.

While it does not focus extensively on girls, it does provide some guidance. For example, the provision of specialised accommodation for unaccompanied minors with specific needs, such as for girls and young women who are pregnant or have become mothers, or adolescents with mental health issues.

**European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) (2018) *Info sheet Meeting Needs of Migrant Girls On the Move***  
<http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/2018/12/04/girlsvoices-meeting-needs-of-migrant-girls-on-the-move/>

This provides an overview of the issues and challenges associated with meeting the needs of migrant girls on the move. It notes that girls face some of the biggest challenges when making the journey for asylum, yet as a group girls' needs are often left out of legal, policy, funding and service provision. Subsumed under the terms '*children*' and '*women and girls*', data specific to the experiences of girls through migration and resettlement is often lacking, which leads to challenges in securing specialised resources. The report notes that a total of 42% of all child asylum seekers in Europe are girls and 75% of refugee children have experienced violence and assault by an adult along their migration route. 4 out of 5 girls arriving from Nigeria to Italy are potential victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The Istanbul Convention (Art. 3) notes that "women" includes girls under the age of 18, and yet girls' needs are inconsistently mainstreamed in new laws, policies and supports. These must integrate, in addition to standard responses for women and for migrant/refugee children, and girls' ability to access services must never be compromised due to societal status or cultural practices. The report makes several recommendations to the EU to improve their protection and provision of services to girls, including unaccompanied and separated girls within legal policy and frameworks, access to education, sexual and reproductive health rights, GBV prevention and response, funding and data collection that is specific to the needs of migrant and refugee girls.

**European Women's Lobby (EWL), Women Refugee Commission (WRC) and European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) (2016) *From conflict to peace? #womensvoices Recommendations on preventing and combatting violence against refugee women and girls on the move***  
<https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/womensvoicesfinalforweb-2.pdf>

This report presents the recommendations from the EWL, WRC and the ENoMW, the #womensvoices project "From conflict to peace? Women and girls' voices on the move" to ensure protection of women and girls' refugees and asylum seekers. The #womensvoices project aims to raise awareness on the situation of women and girls fleeing conflict and travelling through Europe, looking especially at the protection risks they face in terms of male violence against women both on the ground and with regards to the asylum procedures and policies. The report demands

- Comprehensive policies to end all forms of violence against women and girls in the EU and its member states, and specific measures to ensure that women and girls refugees and asylum seekers are protected and get access to justice;
- A humanitarian response which succeeds in protecting women and girls from male violence and exploitation;
- Gender-sensitive asylum policies and procedures to help women and girls to escape or denounce male violence and access to their full human rights.

Checklists were developed to promote protection of women and girls and include:

- EWL checklist '**Implementing a gender-sensitive humanitarian response**' includes the provision of female interpreters; deployment of genders sensitive police officers who have experience working with refugees and other vulnerable people and can identify people with special needs; establishment of information desks with gender sensitive information in all centres and on the journey; sex segregated accommodation and basic facilities; women-only spaces in accommodation and transit centres.
- EWL checklist '**Engendering the asylum systems**' includes training all staff on gender-sensitive interviews and gender-sensitive asylum provisions; implementing quotas for hiring staff to ensure parity between male and female presence, in all sectors of asylum procedures; ensuring female staff for psychological support. This includes special provisions for unaccompanied girls.

**Forin, R., Healy, C., (2018) *Trafficking along Migration Routes to Europe Bridging the Gap between Migration, Asylum and Anti-Trafficking*. International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)**  
[https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/1\\_2018/Bridging\\_the\\_Gap\\_between\\_Migration\\_Asylum\\_and\\_Anti-Trafficking.pdf](https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/1_2018/Bridging_the_Gap_between_Migration_Asylum_and_Anti-Trafficking.pdf)

This research assessment examines the incidence of trafficking and risk factors for trafficking in the context of the Balkan route and in destination countries. It also looks at the gaps, needs and challenges that exist in the identification, referral, protection and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking. The research found indications that trafficking, and exploitation are a major cause of concern for persons travelling along the Balkan route, yet the number of identified victims remains very low. This is partly due to a lack of harmonisation and incorporation of anti-trafficking procedures into the first reception and asylum systems for new arrivals, leading to a disconnect between the two processes. The research also highlighted that in the context of the Balkan

route, trafficking is often related to the migrant smuggling process, with exploitation occurring due to people being in debt to smugglers. Regarding protection and rehabilitation of identified victims, the assessment found that national anti-trafficking systems are often geared towards responding to the needs of particular categories of victims – e.g., European or Sub-Saharan African adult women who are victims of sexual exploitation. The systems are therefore struggling to respond to the specific needs of other kinds of victims of trafficking, such as unaccompanied children who have travelled along the Balkan route to the EU. The research also highlighted that in the framework of existing protection and rehabilitation services for identified victims of trafficking, the legal status of victims is very often uncertain and remains linked to their cooperation in criminal proceedings. This situation discourages victims from seeking help and accessing the long-term protection and rehabilitation services that they are entitled to, which also hampers criminal investigations.

**International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (2018)**  
***Alone and Unsafe Children, migration, and sexual and gender-based violence***  
<https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/11/181126-AloneUnsafe-Report-EN-web.pdf>

This report contains an extensive review of literature, findings from research in Afghanistan, Honduras, Niger and Turkey, and interviews with specialists. It seeks to improve understanding of the risks and types of sexual and gender-based violence faced by children who migrate on their own, as well as the unfortunate and widespread gaps in protection and assistance for these children. It looks closely at the situation in dangerous or remote locations – places that are fragile, conflict-ridden, underserved and hard to reach, where children may be particularly vulnerable. The study also identifies actions that are urgently needed by governments and humanitarian organizations to better protect and assist children migrating on their own and reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, as called for in the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. While figures on the number of UASC are not available, 2017 UN estimates suggests that there were 300,000 UASC. *Alone and Unsafe* shows that when children are in transit alone or without their families, they are at very high risk of being assaulted, sexually abused, raped, trafficked into sexual exploitation, or forced into “survival sex”. It further shows that these threats extend from countries of origin, through countries of transit, and into countries of destination.

Risks among girls on the move are elaborated on in the report particularly in Central America. Research found that unaccompanied girls flee their country because “maras,” the local street gangs, were recruiting them to smuggle and sell drugs in their home countries, using sexual assault as a means of forcing them into compliance. In Honduras, girls as young as nine years old have been victims of gang rape. Unaccompanied girls also cited their fear of sexual assault and rape as a significant motivating factor for fleeing. The report called on governments and aid groups to support it in the creation of dedicated “*humanitarian service points*” along major migration routes where children and other migrants can receive assistance and support. It urges scale-up investment in the training of frontline responders so that they can identify at-risk children and refer them to specialized services. It also recommends that governments keep families together during immigration proceedings and avoid detaining children or their relatives as a result of their immigration status.

**IFRC (2017) *Manual on Smart Practices for Working with Migrant Unaccompanied and Separated Children in the Europe Region***  
<https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/11/UASC-Smart-Practices-Manual-Europe.pdf>

This manual on smart practices for working with migrant UASC is intended to be a resource for National Societies seeking to develop or enhance protection and assistance services for UASC. All children on the move, irrespective of their legal standing, age, gender or health status, should have access to protection and humanitarian assistance. Because of their higher vulnerabilities, UASC require urgent protection. All UASC need to have access to essential basic services, regardless of their legal standing, age, gender or health status. Essential basic services include access to health and psychosocial care, education, legal counsel, shelter, recreation, clothing and nutrition. It provides guidance for identification, MHPSS services, Family Tracing and Reunification, Guardianship, and returnees. It also includes guidelines on how to provide services for girls who are married below legal age and good practice in gender sensitive and child friendly communication techniques during interviews.

**IOM (2017) *Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes***  
[https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrant\\_vulnerability\\_to\\_human\\_trafficking\\_and\\_exploitation.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrant_vulnerability_to_human_trafficking_and_exploitation.pdf)

This report examines migrants' vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation by exploring risk and protective factors associated with unsafe migration, through the systematic evidence collected by IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix operations in 2016. It presents the results from the largest existing set of survey data on the vulnerability of migrants to abuse, exploitation and human trafficking on the Mediterranean routes to Europe. Data derive from interviews conducted over a one-year period with more than 16,000 migrants in seven countries, namely: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Serbia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The survey did not collect information on potential human trafficking for sexual exploitation or on other forms of gender-based violence. Indicators of vulnerability to trafficking include children travelling without their families. Children are more likely than adults to report being held against their will by entities other than State authorities. In the case of both adults and children, the findings indicate that Libya – as a transit country or an initial destination – is the country where migrants are most vulnerable to potential human trafficking and other exploitative practices. Libya stands out as a particularly unsafe country for all migrants, and as a driver of further migration towards what they perceive to be safer destinations.

The report provides recommendations including that the design of programmatic interventions and the proactive identification of vulnerability to human trafficking on the route should be gender-sensitive and pay attention to the different risks that men, boys, women and girls may face during their journey, as well as to the different types of exploitation they may be subject to. Protective services must be age- and gender-sensitive and respond to the different protection needs that men, women, boys and girls may have as a result of their experience.

**IRC, UNICEF, UNHCR (2017) *The Way Forward to Strengthened Policies and Practices for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Europe***  
<https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/media/256/file>

In 2016 UNHCR, UNICEF, and IRC established a consultative process to support states to better operationalise their response for the protection of UASC in Europe – the ‘Roadmap to Strengthened Policies and Practices’. This roadmap for action provides recommendations to improve the situation of refugee and migrant children arriving and staying in Europe without their parents or care giver. It highlights the need to identify children, register them through child-friendly procedures, and build a relationship of trust with them as early as possible. Ensuring that a well-trained guardian takes immediate responsibility for the child, engaging cultural mediators, and mobilizing members of host communities are critical measures that can help build a trusting relationship and protect children from smugglers, traffickers or family pressure. The document provides recommendations developed in a broad consultative process with input from 100 practitioners, including guardians, psychologists, social workers and lawyers, as well as relevant authorities from several European states and the European Union, and refugee and migrant children across the continent. The main suggestions identified fall under the following priority areas.

1. Identification, Registration and Age Assessments
2. Guardianship and Legal Representation
3. Care Arrangements and the Provision of Appropriate Services
4. Comprehensive Solutions in Children’s Best Interests
5. Participation of Children
6. Best Interests of the Child in National Child Protection and Asylum Systems
7. Heavy Bureaucracy and Administration

It provides useful overall guidance and good practices (e.g. same sex interviewers, trainings for officials, interpretation services, age assessments, and sex segregated accommodation etc.) for addressing the needs of UASC but does not provide any specific guidance or measure to address the needs of adolescent girls.

**Save the Children, International Rescue Committee and others (2017) *Out of Sight, Exploited and Alone. A joint brief on the situation for unaccompanied and separated children in Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia.*** <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/out-sight-exploited-and-alone>

This advocacy brief was produced in 2017 and was a joint effort by 12 national and international humanitarian agencies responding to the needs of UASC stranded in or on the move throughout the Balkans, specifically Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia, and Croatia. Key concerns included insufficient and unreliable data or information management on UASC within the region; lack of options for safe accommodation and comprehensive services for UASC in line with each child’s best interests; lack of access to legal pathways and of cross-border case management to improve continuity of care and protection; and exposure to exploitation, violence and trafficking, including as a result of smuggling and violent pushbacks. While not specific to the needs of adolescent girls, the research found that:

- Many children on the move try to complete their journey without being detected or formally registering in each or any of the countries along the way;

- Age assessment procedures either do not exist or remain inadequate with limited procedural guidelines and insufficient and poorly trained staff, at times failing to identify children. Some UASC are erroneously treated as adults, leading to their exclusion from essential child and age appropriate accommodation and services, and impacting their registration procedure;
- Others are registered as accompanied by someone from the group they are traveling with, even though the person claiming to be in charge of the child may be a smuggler;
- Additionally, identification and tracking of UASC and other vulnerable groups of children, such as victims of abuse or exploitation, and those with special needs, are inadequate across the region, due to lack of capacity among frontline workers, including lack of adequate interpretation resources, making it challenge to get a full picture of the UASC caseload;
- Best interest assessments (BIA) and best interest determination (BID) are often carried out in an ad hoc manner, using different criteria, with language barriers when translation is poor or non-existent.

**Save the Children and The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) (2016) “Young and on the Move: children and youth in mixed migration flows within and from the Horn of Africa” Mixed Migration Research Series Study 10 Explaining People on the Move**  
[https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/10080/pdf/young\\_and\\_on\\_the\\_move\\_sep\\_2016.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/10080/pdf/young_and_on_the_move_sep_2016.pdf)

This study provides an overview of children and youth in mixed migration flows within, through and from the Horn of Africa. It assesses a multiplicity of factors that drive the movements of children and youth and explains how their profiles and needs differ depending on their age, sex, nationality, ethnicity, religion, accompanied status, specifics of their family situation and other variables. For the most part, children and youth on the move are undocumented and utilise irregular channels of migration. The protection risks faced by children and youth on the move are multiple. They are determined by the threats that children and youth encounter (including smugglers, traffickers, authorities, other migrants, family members, local communities, environmental factors) and compounded by vulnerabilities (such as their sex, separated/unaccompanied status, lack of documentation, membership of a particular nationality/religion/ethnicity, disabilities).

The report highlights that unaccompanied and separated girls are at particular risk of GBV, including domestic violence. Violence against women and girls on the move by smugglers, officials, and other travelling companions, are reported on the western route, as well as along the southern route. Sexual abuse by smugglers and gangs of migrant girls and women in transit eastwards through Djibouti has also been reported, as well as during the sea voyage to Yemen and on arrival in Yemen. Unaccompanied migrant girls sleeping on the street and beaches of Djibouti-ville are also at risk of sexual violence by passers-by.

**Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC) (2016) After the E.U.-Turkey Deal, Greece, May 2016; WRC (2016) Falling Through the Cracks Germany & Sweden, March 2016; WRC (2016) No Safety in the Balkans Serbia & Slovenia, March 2016; WRC (2015) Protection Risks on Europe’s Shores Greece & Macedonia,**

**November 2015.** <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/gbv/resources/1358-refugee-women-europe>

WRC completed a series of assessments to understand women's and girls' access to humanitarian and legal protection throughout the European refugee migration route in 2015 and 2016. The assessments found that women and girls are often fleeing their countries of origin because of the fear of GBV, including conflict related sexual violence and forced marriage. GBV is also a constant threat during the migration through Europe, including the specific threats of sexual violence and transactional sex. Then, once refugee women and girls reach their destination, they still are vulnerable to violence inside hastily built accommodation centres, where domestic violence, sexual harassment and assault are common complaints. All four missions highlighted significant gaps in protection and services for refugee women and girls at every point along the migration route and in destination countries. Unaccompanied adolescent girls were identified as among the most at risk and their experiences and vulnerabilities are outlined in detail in the reports. Recommendations to prevent violence and exploitation and provide assistance to survivors included: deploying GBV experts to the field, training frontline workers and providing female interpreters; creating standard operating procedures to identify and support survivors of GBV; establishing a coordinated case management system within and across borders in conjunction with civil society organisations; strengthening access to asylum for those with claims of gender-based persecution; and rolling back policies that delay family reunification to reduce the number of women and girls left behind who attempt the perilous journey.

## 6. Glossary

<b>Adolescent</b>	Persons aged 10-19 years
<b>Asylum Seeker</b>	Persons seeking to be admitted into a country as refugees and awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In case of a negative decision, they must leave the country and may be expelled, as may any alien in an irregular situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds
<b>Children</b>	Persons under the age of 18 years.
<b>Child labour</b>	Work undertaken by children under the legal minimum working ages. The term 'child labour' is often described as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity
<b>Refugee</b>	A person, who "owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country"
<b>Trafficking in persons</b>	The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
<b>Separated children</b>	Children separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family member
<b>Smuggling</b>	The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident. <sup>12</sup> Smuggling, contrary to trafficking does not require an element of exploitation, coercion, or violation of human rights.
<b>Youth</b>	Persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years



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<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database;>

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<sup>4</sup> UNFPA, UNHCR and WRC (2016) *Initial Assessment Report: Protection risks for women and girls in the European refugee and migrant crisis in Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR (2018) *Situation Update: Unaccompanied Children (UAC) in Greece 30 September 2018* <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66558>

<sup>6</sup> Reliable data on the number of UASC currently residing in different countries throughout Europe is unavailable. The number of asylum applications filed by UASC can provide an indication but does not necessarily reflect an accurate picture of the geographic dispersion of cases, considering the backlog in registering asylum applications in some countries and onward movement after applying for asylum.

<sup>7</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (2018) *Alone and Unsafe Children, migration, and sexual and gender-based violence* <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/11/181126-AloneUnsafe-Report-EN-web.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> In Greece, the number of refugee and migrant UASC in first reception and identification centres (RICs) and protective custody together has increased by close to 60% compared to December 2017. Similar practices have also been observed in Bulgaria and Spain. UNICEF (2018) *Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe Humanitarian Situation Report # 30*

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<sup>12</sup> Females comprise somewhat less than half, 125 million or 48.4% of the global international migrant stock <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/gender>

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<sup>23</sup> There is no universally accepted definition of irregular migration. IOM defines it as “movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving country” A migrant in an irregular situation may fall within one or more of the following circumstances: He or she may enter the country irregularly, for instance with false documents or without crossing at an official border crossing point; He or she may reside in the country irregularly, for instance, in violation of the terms of an entry visa/residence permit; or he or she may be employed in the country irregularly, for instance he or she may have the right to reside but not to take up paid employment in the country.” <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/irregular-migration>

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### **The GBV AoR Help Desk**

The GBV AoR Helpdesk is a technical research, analysis, and advice service for humanitarian practitioners working on GBV prevention and response in emergencies at the global, regional and country level. Managed by Social Development Direct on behalf of the GBV Area of Responsibility, the Helpdesk is staffed by a global roster of GBV experts. Any view or opinions expressed in reports do not necessarily reflect those of the GBV AoR Helpdesk or any of the contributing experts.

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